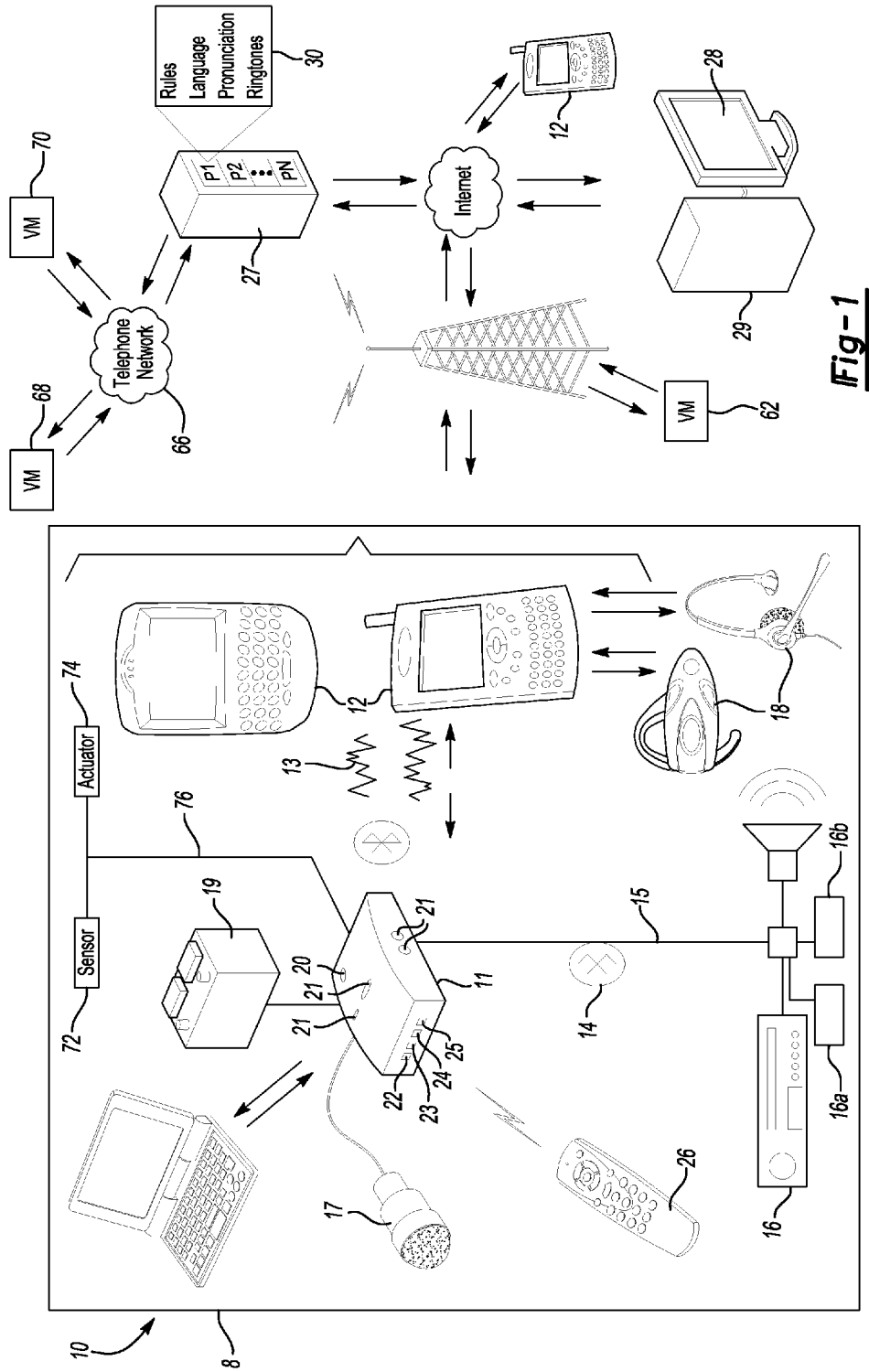
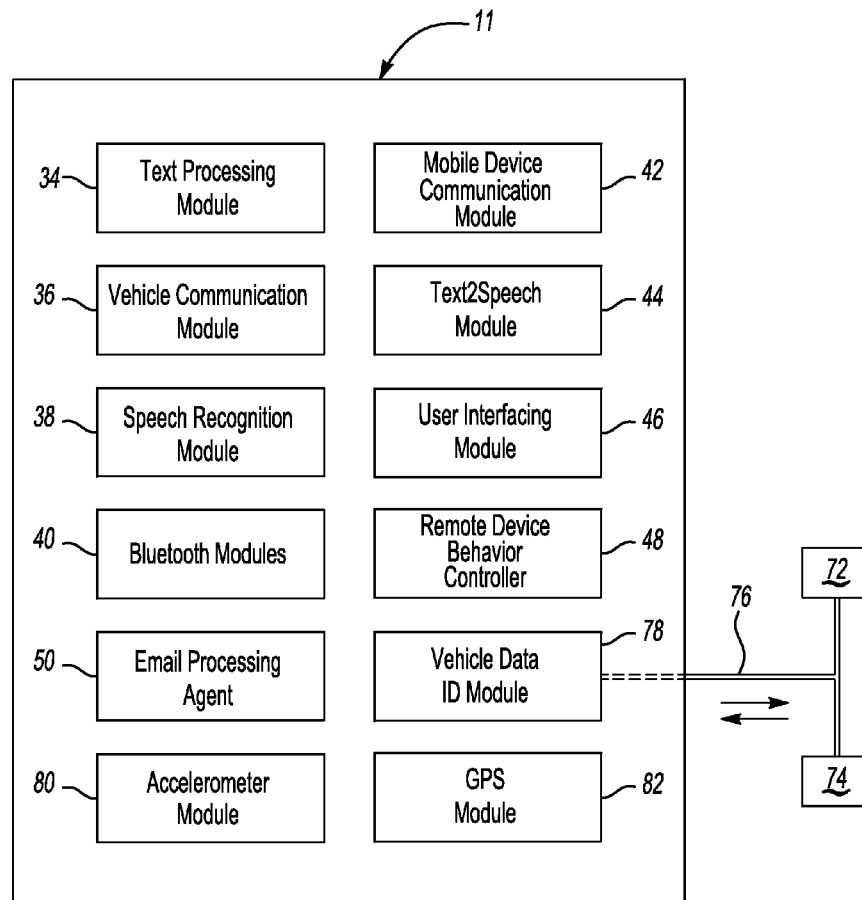


(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04M 1/60 (2006.01)
G10L 13/00 (2006.01)
G10L 15/26 (2006.01)
H04M 1/27 (2006.01)
H04M 1/725 (2006.01)

(56) **References Cited**
U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS
2009/0250349 A1* 10/2009 Malik et al. 204/605
2010/0198428 A1* 8/2010 Sultan et al. 701/2
* cited by examiner



**Fig-2**

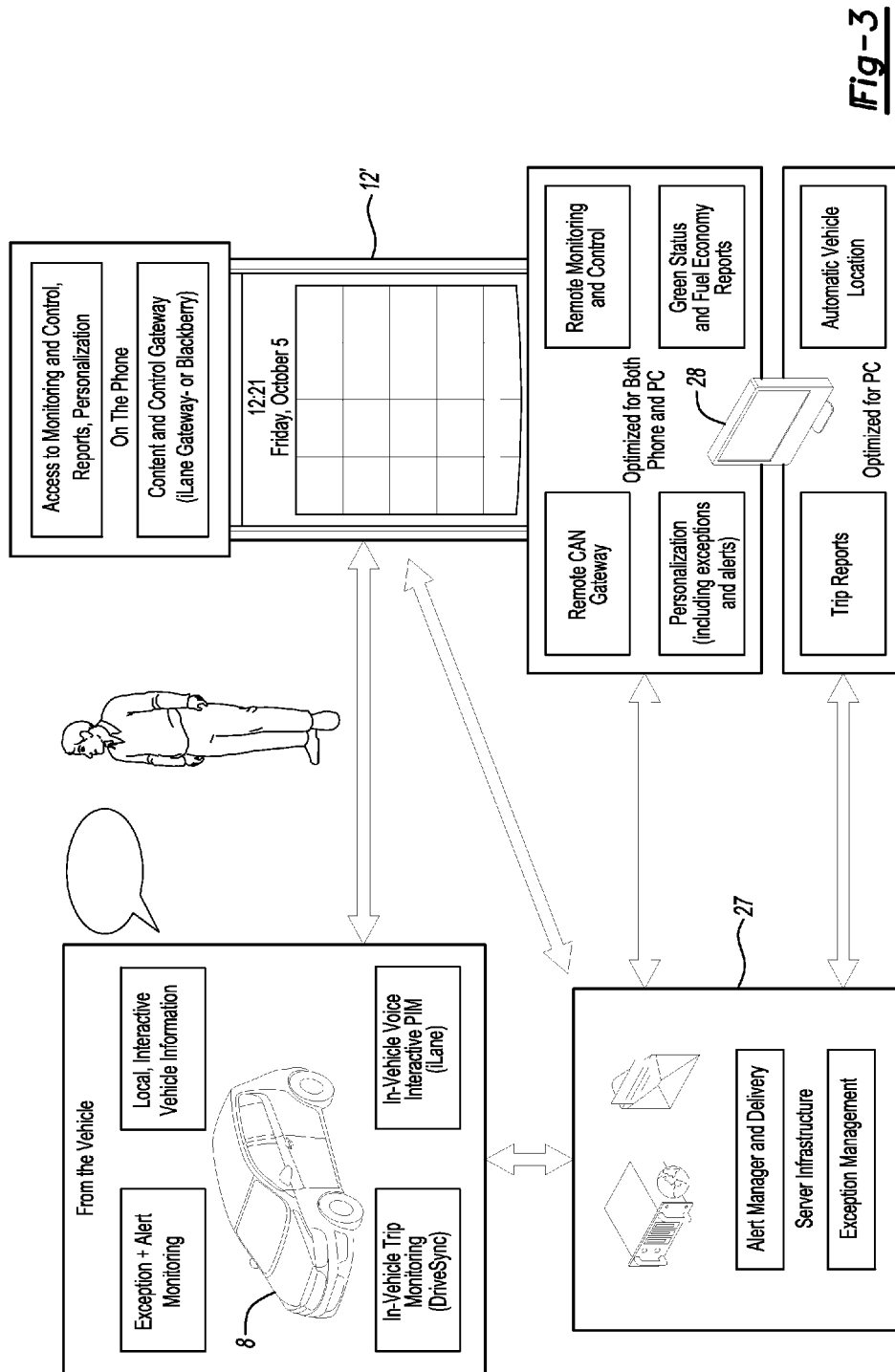
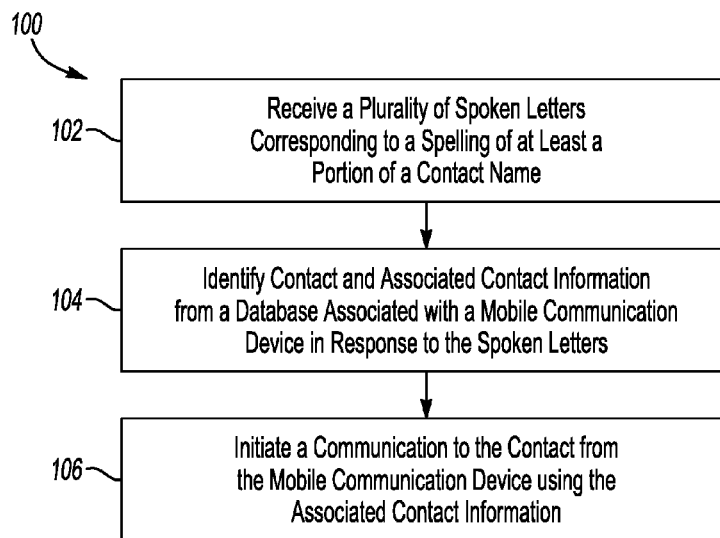
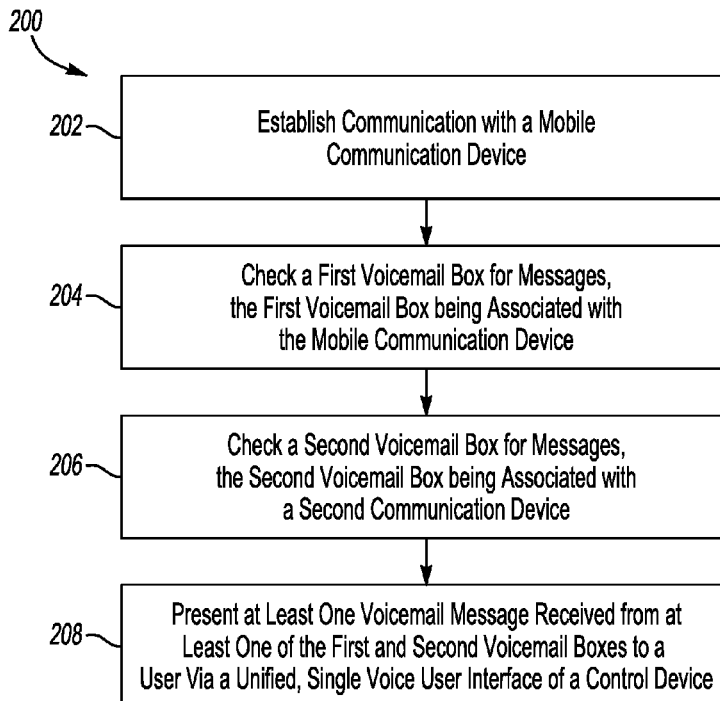


Fig-3

**Fig-4****Fig-5**

1

COMMUNICATION SYSTEM WITH PERSONAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REMOTE VEHICLE MONITORING AND CONTROL FEATURES

BACKGROUND

This application relates to communication, and more particularly to a communication system with personal information management features and also vehicle remote vehicle monitoring and control features.

SUMMARY

A vehicle communication system includes a control unit in a vehicle, a vehicle data bus operable to transmit vehicle data to the control unit, and a mobile communication device having data network access. The mobile device has a self-contained mode in which the mobile communication device processes and displays the network data received via the data network and in which the control unit transmits the vehicle data to the mobile communication device. The mobile communication device also has an immersive mode in which the control unit processes the network data received via the data network and in which the control unit converts the vehicle data to audible speech and plays the audible speech in the vehicle.

A method for communicating vehicle data and network data to a user in a vehicle includes the steps of determining a presence of a mobile communication device in the vehicle and downloading network data email via the mobile communication device onto a control unit in the vehicle. Vehicle data is downloaded to the control unit via at least one vehicle data bus. Based on the step of determining a presence of the mobile communication device in the vehicle and based on a user profile, text of the network data email is converted to speech and vehicle data is converted to speech that is audibly played for the user.

These and other features of the present invention can be best understood from the following specification and drawings, the following of which is a brief description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 schematically illustrates a communication system according to one embodiment.

FIG. 2 illustrates some of the components of the control unit of the communication system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 schematically illustrates various components of the vehicle monitoring and control features of the communication system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 schematically illustrates a method of initiating a communication from a mobile communication device.

FIG. 5 schematically illustrates a method of presenting voicemail to a user.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A communication system 10 is shown in FIG. 1 as implemented in a vehicle 8. The system 10 includes a device control unit 11 which, in one example, is mounted in a discreet location within the vehicle 8, such as under the dashboard, in the glove compartment, etc. The control unit 11 supports wireless communication via Bluetooth (IEEE 802.15.1) or any other wireless standard to communicate wirelessly with a cell phone, PDA, or other mobile communication device 12. In one example, all data 13 is encrypted prior to transmission.

2

The audio output of the control unit 11 is transmitted either wirelessly 14 or through a direct, wired connection 15 to the vehicle's sound system, which may include a radio 16, satellite TV 16A, satellite radio 16B, etc. The audio input for the control unit 11 is obtained either through a directly connected microphone 17, through an existing vehicle hands-free system, or wirelessly through a headset 18 connected to the mobile communication device 12.

The control unit 11 connects to the vehicle's battery 19 for power. An AC adapter is available for use at home or in the office. For portable use in other vehicles, an optional "Y" or pass-through cable is available to plug into a cigarette lighter accessory socket for power.

The control unit 11 contains a recessed button 20 which enables the driver to do the following: register new or replacement remotes; pair the device with a new mobile communication device 12, and clear all preferences and reset the device to its factory default settings. The control unit 11 also has a set of four status lights 21 which display the following information: power and system health, vehicle connection status and activity, mobile communication device connection status and activity, and information access and general status.

In one example, the control unit 11 and the mobile communication device 12 recognize when the user, and the user's associated mobile communication device 12, are near to, or have entered the vehicle 8. This may be accomplished, for example, by Bluetooth pairing of the device 12 and the vehicle 8, or similar wireless communication initiation protocols. Within this range, the handheld device 12 changes from its normal, self-contained operating mode, to an immersive communication mode, where it is operated through the control unit 11. As will be described in more detail below, among other things, this mode enables the user to hear their emails played through the vehicle's sound system 16, or, alternatively, and if so equipped, played through the sound system of the mobile communication device 12 (e.g. headphones 18). Microphones 17 in the vehicle 8 or on the mobile communication device 12 detect user-generated voice commands. Thus, the user is not required to change modes on the mobile communication device 12; instead, the control unit 11 and associated mobile communication device 12 recognize that the user is proximate the vehicle 8 and adjust the mode accordingly.

In addition to adjusting the mode based on vehicle proximity, the system 10 may adjust between a public and a private mode. For instance, as explained above, the system's immersive communication mode ordinarily occurs when the user is proximate the vehicle 8. The immersive communication mode may have a public setting and a private setting. The public setting plays the emails over headphones 18 associated with the mobile communication device 12. Such a setting prevents a user from disturbing other occupants of the vehicle 8. The private setting plays the emails over the vehicle sound system 16, and is ordinarily used when the user is the only occupant in the vehicle 8.

Of course, such system settings may be adjusted by the user and their particular preferences in their user profile 30. For example, the user may prefer to switch to the immersive communication mode when the mobile communication device 12 and user are within a certain distance from the vehicle 8, whereas another user may switch modes only when the mobile communication device 12 and user have entered the vehicle 8. Further, the user may want to operate the control unit 11 and associated device 12 in a public mode, even if other occupants are in the vehicle 8.

Similarly, the system 10 recognizes when the user leaves the vehicle 8 and the mobile communication device 12 reverts

to a self-contained (normal) mode. The mobile communication device **12** may also record the vehicle's location when the user leaves the vehicle **8** (based upon GPS or other information). Accordingly, the user can recall the vehicle position at a later time, either on the device or elsewhere on the system, which may aid the user in locating the vehicle **8**.

The device has multiple USB ports **22**. There are standard USB ports which serve the following functions: to enable the driver to store preferences, settings, and off-line memos and transcriptions on a standard USB flash drive; to permit future expansion, upgrades, and add-on features; and to connect an Ethernet dongle for high-speed internet access. In one example the control unit **11** has Internet access without the use of a dongle. In addition, the control unit **11** has a dual-purpose USB 2.0 port which in addition to the features mentioned above, provides USB 2.0 "on-the-go" functionality by directly connecting to the USB port of a notebook computer with a standard cable (i.e. similar to connecting a portable camera or GPS unit directly to a computer).

Other ports on the control unit **11** include an 1/8" audio jack **23** to connect to a car stereo without Bluetooth support, a 1/8" microphone jack **24** to support external high-quality microphones for hands-free calling, and a 1/8" stereo headset jack **25** for use away from the vehicle or in a vehicle without Bluetooth support.

The system **10** also includes an optional remote control **26** to interact with the control unit **11**. The remote control contains lithium batteries, similar to that of a remote keyless entry remote for a common vehicle.

In order to provide security and privacy, the device is operable to use both authentication and encryption. Voice-based biometrics may also be used to further enhance security.

The driver stores his or her settings for the device in their settings profile **30**, which may be stored in a database on an Internet server **27** (see FIG. 1), or may be stored elsewhere, such as on the mobile communication device **12** or the control unit **11**. In the example where the profile **30** is stored on the server **27**, the control unit **11** utilizes the Internet access provided by the driver's mobile communication device **12** to download the driver's profile **30** via the Internet (e.g. GSM/GPRS). Of course, it may also be possible that the control unit **11** would use its own Internet access, and not that of the mobile communication device **12**. The control unit **11** is operable to use the pairing information from the mobile communication device **12** to retrieve the correct profile **30** from the server **27**. If the profile **30** has already been downloaded to the control unit **11**, the control unit **11** may just check for changes and updates on the server **27**. Each profile **30** on the server **27** contains a set of rules that the control unit **11** uses to make decisions on content delivery to the driver. The driver can access and modify their profile **30** on the Internet server **27** through either the Internet using a web-based interface **28** on a user computer **29**, or through a simple interface directly accessible from the associated mobile communication device **12**. Alternatively, the profile **30** may be always stored and modified on the control unit **11** only and can be accessed via the mobile communication device **12** and/or via a USB connection to a laptop or desktop computer.

As shown in FIG. 2, the control unit **11** includes a text processing module **34**, a vehicle communication module **36**, a speech recognition module **38**, Bluetooth (or other wireless communication) modules **40**, a mobile communication device communication module **42**, a text-to-speech module **44**, a user interface module **46**, and a remote device behavior controller **48**. The control unit **11** has an email processing agent **50** that processes email messages and determines the

identity of the sender, whether the message has an attachment, and if so what type of attachment, and then extracts the body-text of the message. The control unit **11** also determines if a message is a reminder, news, or just a regular email message. The control unit **11** is operable to use a data mining algorithm to determine if any parts of the email should be excluded (e.g. a lengthy signature).

Hands-Free Email

One feature of the system is hands-free email. The control unit **11** is able to access a data network (e.g. the Internet) using a data network connection (e.g. GSM/GPRS). In one example the control unit **11** accesses the data network through the mobile communication device **12**. In one example the control unit **11** has its own direct access to the data network, such that the control unit **11** can communicate directly with the data network without use of the mobile communication device **12**. Using the text-to-speech module **44**, the control unit **11** can read email to the driver. When new email arrives, the control unit **11** uses the profile **30** to guide an intelligent filtering and prioritization system which enables the driver to do the following: ensure that emails are filtered and read in order of priority, limit the frequency of new email interruptions, send automatic replies without driver intervention, and forward certain emails to a third-party without interruption. In addition, prior to being read out loud, the control unit **11** processes emails to optimize clarity. Part of that process involves detecting acronyms, symbols, and other more complex structures and ensuring that they can be easily understood when read. The control unit **11** is operable to provide intelligent email summarization in order to reduce the time required to hear the important content of email when read out loud.

The driver can interact with the control unit **11** using voice commands, including "go back" and "go forward," to which the control unit **11** responds by going back to the previous phrase or sentence or the next phrase or sentence in the email respectively. In addition, speaking "go back, go back" would back up two phrases or sentences.

Additional hands-free email features include a time-saving filtering system which allows the driver to hear only the most important content or meaning of an email. Another email-related feature is the ability to download custom email parsers to add a new dimension to audible email, and to parse informal email styles (e.g., l8, ttyl).

The hands-free email functionality includes content-rich notification. When providing notification of a new email, the control unit **11** provides a quick summary about the incoming email, enabling the driver to prioritize which messages are more important. Examples include "You have mail from Sally" (similar to a caller-ID for email), or "You have an important meeting request from Cathy." The control unit **11** looks up the known contact names based upon the sender's email address in the user's address book on the mobile communication device **12**. The control unit **11** uses known contact names to identify the parties of an email instead of just reading the cryptic email addresses out loud.

In addition to reading email, the control unit **11** also enables the driver to compose responses. The driver can send a reply using existing text or voice templates (e.g. "I'm in the car call me at 'number,'" or "I'm in the car, I will reply as soon as I can"). New emails can also be created and sent with one or more voice recording attachments (e.g., .wav file, .mp3 filed). The driver is also provided the option of calling the sender of the email on the phone using existing contact information in the address book, or responding to meeting requests and calendar updates (e.g. Outlook). Emails can also be created as freeform text responses by dictating the contents of the email. The device then translates that into text form for email

5

transmission. An intelligent assistant will be immediately available to suggest possible actions and to provide help as needed. Again all of these options are prompted by verbal inquiries by the control unit 11 which can be selected by voice commands by the driver.

The control unit 11 supports multiple email accounts, and email can be composed from any existing account. Incoming email can also be intelligently handled and prioritized based upon account. Optional in-vehicle email addresses on a custom domain are available. Emails sent from this address would include a notification that the email was composed while in transit. When composing an email to an in-vehicle email address, the sender knows that the email will be read out loud in a vehicle. If the traditional email is "george@work.net," then the in-vehicle address may be "george@driving.net." Optional enhanced existing email addresses are also available on supported email systems. For example, if the traditional email is "george@work.com," an enhanced in-vehicle address of "george+driving@work.com" may be selected.

Enhanced Hands-Free Telephone Calls

Another feature of this invention is enhanced hands-free telephone calls. This includes transparent use of any existing hands-free system. All incoming telephone calls can use either the existing vehicle hands-free system or the user headset 18. If an expected important email arrives while the driver is on the phone, an "email-waiting" indicator (lights and/or subtle tones) will provide subtle notification without disrupting the conversation. The headset 18 can be activated at any time for privacy or to optimize clarity. The control unit 11 will seamlessly switch from the vehicle hands-free system to the private headset 18 for privacy.

The control unit 11 also features enhanced caller-ID. The device announces incoming calls by reading the caller name or number out loud (e.g., "This is a call from John Doe, do you want to answer it?"). This eliminates the need to look away from the road to find out who is calling. Vehicle-aware screening can also automatically forward specific calls to voicemail or to another number when driving, again based upon the driver's profile. Normal forwarding rules will resume when leaving the vehicle.

The control unit 11 also provides voice activated answering and calling. When the control unit 11 announces a telephone call, the driver can accept the call using a voice command. The driver can use voice commands associated with either contacts in an address book or with spoken phone numbers to place outgoing telephone calls (e.g., "Call Krista").

The user can say, "Call by name," to call someone in the user's contacts, or "Call by number," and then speak the phone number to the control unit 11 (for example, the control unit 11 listens to all of the numbers, without reference the user's contacts). Alternatively, the user can say, "Call by spelling" or "Call by alphabet," in which case the user then spells the name of the contact. Once the user has dictated enough letters to define a unique contact, the control unit 11 confirms the contact choice (e.g., "do you want to call John Adams?"). In one example, the control unit 11 accepts spelling exemplary word, such as "A as in alpha," "B as in boy," "C as in cat," etc. The user does not have to use a particular word for each letter, but it is easier for the control unit 11 to recognize the letter with the confirming exemplary word (just as it is for humans).

Unified Information Management

Another feature of the system 10 is that it provides unified information management. The control unit 11 provides a consistent interface for seamless access to incoming and outgoing telephone calls, email, vehicle data, and other sources

6

of information. The existing hands-free interface automatically switches between telephone calls, reading email, and providing important notifications. When entering the vehicle, the control unit 11 automatically provides an enhanced voice-based interface ("immersive mode"), and when leaving the vehicle, the mobile communication device 12 automatically resumes normal operation ("self-contained mode"). Email reading can also be paused to accept an incoming phone call, and can be resumed when the call is complete.

In addition, the driver can communicate with any contact through email, a phone call, or an SMS text message simply by speaking. The control unit 11 provides enhanced information for incoming telephone calls. The name and number, if available, are read out loud to ensure that the driver knows the caller without looking away from the road. A nickname, or other information located in an address book, may also be used for notification.

The driver can also reply to an email with a phone call. While reading an email, the driver can contact the sender by placing a telephone call with address book information. When a phone call is made, but the line is busy or no voicemail exists, the user is given the option of sending an email to the same contact instead. This eliminates the need to wait and try calling the person again.

Within their profile 30, the driver can prioritize between email and phone calls, so that an important email will not be interrupted by a less important phone call. In addition, custom mp3 (or other format) ring tones can be associated with both incoming emails and telephone calls. Ring tones can be customized by email from certain contacts, phone calls from certain contacts, or email about certain subjects. Custom "call waiting" audible indicators can be used when an important email arrives while on the phone, or when an important phone call arrives while reading or composing an email.

Enhanced Hands-Free Calendar

Another feature of the system 10 is the enhanced hands-free calendar wherein the control unit 11 utilizes the calendar functionality of the user's mobile communication device 12. The control unit 11 reads the subject and time of calendar reminders out loud, and the driver can access additional calendar information with voice commands if desired. The driver can also perform in-transit schedule management by reviewing scheduled appointments (including date, time, subject, location and notes); accepting, declining, or forwarding meeting requests from supported systems (e.g. Outlook); scheduling meetings; and automatically annotating meetings with location information. The driver can also store location-based reminders, which will provide reminders the next time the vehicle is present in a specified geographical area, and automatically receive information associated with nearby landmarks. In addition, the driver could plan and resolve meeting issues by communicating directly with other participants' location-aware devices.

Do Not Disturb

Another feature of the system 10 is the "do not disturb" functionality. When passengers are present in the vehicle, the control unit 11 can be temporarily silenced. Even when silent, the control unit 11 will continue to intelligently handle incoming email, email forwarding, providing automatic email replies, and processing email as desired. A mute feature is also available.

Integrated Voice Memo Pad

Another feature of the system 10 is the integrated voice memo pad, which enables the driver to record thoughts and important ideas while driving so they will not be forgotten while parking or searching for a memo pad or device. Memos can be transferred via email to the driver's inbox, or to any of

the driver's contacts. Memos can also be wirelessly transferred to a computer desktop via the Bluetooth interface as the user arrives in the office, or transferred to a removable USB flash memory drive. Memos can also be annotated automatically using advanced context information including location, weather, and trip information. For example, "this memo was recorded at night in a traffic jam on the highway, halfway between the office and the manufacturing facility." Such augmented information can provide valuable cues when reviewing memos.

Access to Diverse Information

Another feature of the example embodiment of the system **10** is the ability to access to diverse information. Information is available in audible form (text-to-speech) from a wide range of sources. First, the control unit **11** provides access to personal connectivity and time management information. This includes email (new and previously read), incoming caller name and number, SMS messages, MMS messages, telephone call logs, address book, calendar and schedule, and instant messages.

Second, the control unit **11** provides multi-format support. This includes email attachments that can be read out loud, including plain text, audio attachments (e.g., .wav, .mp3), HTML (e.g., encoded emails and web sites), plain text portions of Word and PowerPoint files, Adobe Portable Document format ("PDF"), OpenDocument formats, and compressed and/or encoded attachments of the above formats (e.g., .zip).

Third, the control unit **11** provides environment and location awareness via GPS module **82**. This includes current location and navigation information, local weather conditions, vehicle status, and relevant location-specific information (e.g., where is "work", where is "home?").

Fourth, the control unit **11** provides remote access to information. This includes existing news sources (e.g. existing RSS feeds) and supported websites. This also includes subscription to value-added services including: weather, custom alerts (e.g. stock price triggers), traffic conditions, personalized news, e-books (not limited to audio books, but any e-book), personalized audio feeds, and personalized image or video feeds for passengers. The system obtains, translates, and provides personalized news content in audible form within a vehicle without explicit user requests. An individual may set their preferences by selecting from a set of common sources of information, or by specifying custom search criteria. When new information is available and relevant to the individual's preferences, it is read out loud to the individual when appropriate. Appropriate instances can be specified by the individual using a combination of in-vehicle presence detection, time-of-day, and importance of the information relative to other personal events including email, phone calls, meetings and text messages.

Individual preferences are fine tuned using negative feedback as specific stories and events are read out loud to the individual. This negative feedback is used in combination with the individual's personal search criteria to refine the relevance of future personalized content. In addition to online news content, the individual may also select other available online content, including stock market events and general web search terms. Some examples of personalized content include:

Weather

Custom non-vehicle data alerts (e.g. stock price triggers)

Traffic conditions

Personalized news

e-books (Not limited to audio-books, but any e-book)

Personalized audio feeds

Personalized image or video feeds for passengers

All text information is parsed and translated to optimize intelligibility before being read out loud to the individual.

Notification rules can be set by the individual using any combination of time interval, in-vehicle presence, and importance of the news event with appropriate location aware hardware support, notification rules can also include location based constraints. Desired news content can be selected using predefined templates or custom search terms.

User feedback is incorporated to maintain historical information about the news events to which the individual listens, news events that are interrupted, and news events to which the individual provides explicit feedback. This information is used to help filter subsequent news information and provide the user with more relevant news information the longer they use the service.

To minimize the volume of wireless data transfer, all searching and selection of relevant content may be performed using a server with a wired data connection. Appropriate instances to present new information are detected locally (within the vehicle). When an appropriate instance occurs, a short request is sent to trigger the transmission of the most recent personalized news information from the search server.

Personalization of Personal Information Management

Another feature in the example system **10** is extensive personalization and customization for email handling, email notification, time-sensitive rules, vehicle-aware actions, text-to-speech preferences, and multiple user support.

The email handling settings in the user's profile **30** allow the driver to use the control unit's **11** built-in intelligent email parsing and processing. This enables the driver to avoid receiving notification for every trivial incoming email. Some of the intelligent parsing features include automatic replies, forwarding and prioritization based on content and sender, and substitution of difficult phrases (e.g. email addresses and web site URLs) with simple names and words. The driver can also choose to hear only select information when a new email arrives (e.g., just the sender name, or the sender and subject, or a quick summary). Email "ring tones" are also available for incoming emails based on sender or specific keywords. Prepared text or voice replies can be used to send frequently used responses (e.g. "I'm in transit right now"). Some prepared quick-responses may be used to automatically forward an email to a pre-selected recipient such as an administrative assistant. The driver can also set up both email address configuration and multiple email address rules (e.g. use "me@work.com" when replying to emails sent to "me@work.com," but use "me@mobile.com" when composing new emails).

The driver can also customize notification. This includes prioritizing emails and phone calls based on caller or sender and subject (e.g., never read emails from Ben out loud, or if an email arrives from George, it should be read before others). The driver can also limit the amount of notifications received (e.g., set minimum time between notifications, or maximum number of emails read in a short period of time).

Time-sensitive rules in the profile **30** may include options such as "don't bother me in the morning," or "only notify me about incoming email between these hours." The driver can also configure audible reminder types based on calendar and scheduling items from the mobile communication device. Vehicle-aware actions are configurable based on the presence of the user in the vehicle. These actions include the content of automatic replies and predefined destinations and rules to automatically forward specific emails to an administrative assistant or other individual. These also include actions to

take when multiple Bluetooth enabled mobile communication devices are present (e.g., switch to silent “do not disturb” mode, or take no action).

The text-to-speech settings for the control unit **11** are also configurable. This includes speech characteristics such as speed, voice, and volume. The voice may be set to male or female, and may be set to speak a number of languages, including but not limited to US English, UK English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Dutch, and Portuguese. A base set of languages will be provided with the control unit **11**, with alternate languages being available in the future. A user can set personal preferences for pronunciation of specific words, such as difficult contact names, and specialized acronyms or symbols, such as “H₂O.” By default, most acronyms are spelled out letter by letter (e.g., IMS, USB).

Information about specific words or phrases can be used to enhance both speech recognition performance and text-to-speech performance, which may include context sensitive shortcuts. For example, nicknames could be expanded into an email address if the driver is dictating an email. In addition, email addresses could be expanded to a common name when found. A user can also set custom voice prompts or greetings.

The control unit **11** also features multiple user support, wherein multiple people can share the same control unit. The device automatically identifies each person by their mobile communication device **12**, and maintains individual profiles **30** for each driver.

Connectivity

The connectivity functionality of the control unit **11** enables it to function as a hands-free audio system. It interacts with supported Bluetooth hands-free devices, including but not limited to Bluetooth enabled vehicles (e.g., HS, HFP, and A2DP), after-market hands-free vehicle products, and supported headsets to provide privacy. For vehicles not containing Bluetooth or other wireless support, the control unit **11** can connect directly to the vehicle’s audio system **16** through a wired connection. In one example a retrofit solution could be used for existing vehicles lacking wireless connectivity in the form of an optional after-market Bluetooth kit.

The system **10** may include a remote control **26** for accessing the control unit **11**. Using this feature, emergency response support may be available for direct assistance in emergencies, providing GPS location information if available. The driver could also use the control unit **11** through an advanced wireless audio/visual system, including such features as streaming music and providing image content (e.g., PowerPoint, images attached in emails, slideshows). Integrated steering-wheel column buttons could also be an available option.

The control unit **11** can also connect to a computer and external devices. This could include personal computers with Bluetooth to conveniently exchange information over a personal area network (“PAN”). This could also include GPS devices (with Bluetooth or other wireless or wired connectivity) for location awareness. This could also include storage devices (Bluetooth or other wireless or wired) for personal e-book libraries, or to manage offline content with the unified hands-free interface. In one example, an optional cable is available for controlling an iPod or other music player with voice commands. Through the device’s USB ports, the driver can expand the functionality of the device by attaching such items as a USB GPRS/EDGE/3G device for direct mobile access without a separate mobile communication device, or a USB WiFi for high-speed Internet access.

Upgradeability and Expansion

The driver may add future enhancements to the control unit **11** wirelessly using standard Bluetooth enabled devices. This

includes support for wireless transfer with a desktop or notebook computer to transfer and synchronize information. Advanced Bluetooth profile support (e.g. A2DP) for stereo and high quality audio is also available.

As mentioned previously, the control unit **11** will contain two USB ports. The standard USB port or ports will provide convenient access to standard USB devices for storing preferences on a standard USB flash drive; storing and moving off-line memos and transcriptions recorded by the device; and future expansion, upgrades, and add-on features. The dual-purpose USB 2.0 “On-The-Go” port or ports will provide both the aforementioned features to access USB devices, and also direct connections to a computer with a standard cable (e.g. just like connecting a digital camera or GPS unit directly to a computer).

Call by Spelling

As discussed above, a user can say, “Call by spelling” or “Call by alphabet,” and the user can then proceed to spell the name of the contact. Once the user has dictated enough letters to define a unique contact, the control unit **11** confirms the contact choice through a confirmation prompt, in which a suggested contact is presented to the user (e.g., “do you want to call John Adams?”). Thus, a second portion of the spoken letters may be ignored in response to a first portion of the spoken letters being sufficient to identify a desired contact. Suggested contacts may be listed in an order of decreasing confidence, such that frequently used contacts are suggested prior to rarely used contacts.

If the user’s spoken letters result in a plurality of search results, the control unit **11** presents a disambiguation prompt to the user, in which a suggested contact and a quantity of found contacts is presented (e.g., “There are 3 Johns. Did you mean John Smith?”).

In one example, if multiple contacts have the same name, the control unit **11** presents additional information about a suggested contact, such as a contact company, a contact city, a middle name, or an email address (e.g., “There are 5 John Smiths. Did you mean John at IMS?”).

In response to the confirmation or disambiguation prompts, the user is given the chance to accept the suggested contact, to reject the suggested contact, to re-spell the contact, or to exit the contact spelling mode. In one example, the step of transmitting a suggested contact is repeated in response to the user rejecting the suggested contact. If the user rejects a contact a predetermined number of times (e.g. 5 times), the control unit **11** may remind the user that the user can restart the spelling process.

In one example, the control unit **11** accepts spelling exemplary word, such as “A as in alpha,” “B as in boy,” “C as in cat,” etc. The user does not have to use a particular word for each letter, but it is easier for the control unit **11** to recognize the letter with the confirming exemplary word (just as it is for humans). Thus, the exemplary word may be used to confirm a spoken letter associated with the exemplary word.

In one example the process of comparing spoken letters to known contacts is performed using an approximate string matching algorithm. This may include the Fuzzy Bitmap algorithm using a Levenshtein distance approach for comparisons. A weighting scheme for analyzing spoken letters may place emphasis on the beginning of a spoken name, such that a larger penalty exists for missing or substituting a first letter than a missing or substituted middle or ending letter. For English language speaking, the Soundex code may be used as a starting point to define costs to substitute one letter with another.

Once the user confirms a contact, the control unit **11** initiates a communication with the contact, such as via a phone

11

call, email, or SMS or MMS message, for example. In one example the control unit 11 receives a spoken message from a user, and then translates the speech of the spoken message into text for an email or an SMS text message.

FIG. 4 schematically illustrates a “call by spelling” method 100 of initiating a communication from a mobile communication device. A plurality of spoken letters corresponding to a spelling of at least a portion of a contact name is received (step 102). In response to the spoken letters, a contact and associated contact information is identified from a database associated with a mobile communication device (step 104). A communication to the contact is initiated from the mobile communication device using the associated contact information (step 106).

Voice mail

The control unit 11 and/or the user’s profile 30 store information provided by the user for accessing voicemail accounts belonging to the user. For example, the user may have a voicemail box 62 associated with the user’s mobile communication device 12, another voicemail box 68 associated with a home telephone number, another voicemail box 70 associated with a work telephone number, etc., accessible over a telephone network 66. The control unit 11 and/or server 27 provide integrated access to all of these voicemail boxes 62, 68, 70 to the user.

The control unit 11 and/or server 27 store information indicating how to access and control all of the voicemail boxes 62, 68, 70, for example: telephone number, password, control keys (e.g. “press ‘3’ for next message”). Via a voice-driven menu on the control unit 11, the user registers each voicemail box 62, 68, 70 and the access/control information on the control unit 11, which then copies it to the server 27. The user can also choose to store this information on the server 27 (which copies it to the control unit 11) via the user’s computer 29 over the wide area network. The user can also choose to store the information via the mobile communication device 12 to the server 27 and/or control unit 11. The control unit 11 can also learn remote voicemail DTMF commands in an automated or semi-automated manner, by analyzing the audio signal originating from the voicemail box 62, 68, 70 and providing appropriate audible stimuli. For example, the control unit 11 can listen for “press 3 to play the next message,” and parse the spoken information to automatically associate “3” with “next”.

The voicemail box 42 associated with the mobile communication device 12 will provide an indication on the mobile communication device 12 of the existence of a new voicemail message. This indication is sent to the control unit 11, which can then inform the user of the new voicemail message according to prioritization rules set up by the user. The control unit 11 and/or server 27 periodically check voicemail in the voicemail boxes 68, 70 using the stored information to provide indications of new voicemail to the control unit 11.

According to the user’s stored prioritization rules, the control unit 11 notifies the user of new voicemail via speech from control unit 11. The prioritization rules could be stored on the mobile communication device 12, on the control unit 11, or on the Internet server 27, for example. The control unit 11 references voicemail meta-data and gives the user spoken or visual information about the caller, length, urgency/priority, and age of the recent voicemail messages.

The system can, without requiring direct voicemail user engagement, process existing voicemail messages and expose this content using an alternate user interface. The processing may involve previously described actions, including translation from voice to text. The system can cross-reference voicemail meta-data against local or remote data-

12

bases, including the phone’s address book, to augment voicemail caller number information with nickname or real name. By referencing a database associated with the mobile communication device 12 (e.g. the user’s contacts), the control unit 11 can announce the name of the caller who left the voicemail and ask the user, “do you want to listen to a voicemail from Sarah Smith?” (for example). The control unit 11 can also facilitate responding to the voicemail, such as returning the call or responding with an email, IM or SMS message, by referencing the appropriate contact information.

The system can consolidate information across multiple voicemail systems 62, 68, 70 and present the information in a unified, single voice user interface to minimize overhead time dialing into multiple systems

The system can access voicemail or PBX systems using a combination of both spoken language and/or DTMF codes, triggered by time delay, an audible event from the remote party, or a spoken command from the user. This is important to access voicemail systems in complex environments. A failsafe method exists to access voicemail in addition to any number of new services requiring DTMF access. This method augments a normal phone conversation, and presents DTMF codes to the remote party when the user speaks specific keywords. For example, many customer support systems leverage DTMF codes for access. This “failsafe” method is valuable to interact with any dial-in system without requiring pre-configuration.

In use, the control unit 11 informs the user that he/she has voice mail. The user instructs control unit 11 to access his voice mailbox with carrier, at home or at work, or other voice mailbox. The user provides control unit 11 with mailbox access code during the session or during control unit 11 installation/activation, or via voice or manual command to inform control unit 11 of the access code for each mailbox. Control unit 11 interprets the user voice command and translate to the appropriate commands of the specific mailbox, for example, if the mailbox uses the pressing of 3 on the keypad to signify moving to next message in the mailbox, the user says “next voice message,” and control unit 11 translates this command to “3” and causes the mailbox to advance to the next message. The user says “delete,” control unit 11 translates that to the appropriate mailbox command (commonly “7”) and causes the mailbox to delete the message. The invention supports all user commands, including, read again, forward voice message, delete, save, etc. The invention supports a “translate to email” application whereby the voice mail is processed and converted to text. The translation can be forwarded to a user as text email, can be saved in the user device as text, or read to the user using control unit 11 text to speech capability. The user can chose to forward an audio copy of the voice message as an attachment to other users using the email application. The user can instruct the system to access different voice mailboxes: work voice mailbox, personal voice mailbox, family voice mailbox, or any mailbox the user labels using a certain designation.

FIG. 5 schematically illustrates a method 200 of presenting voicemail to a user. Communication is established between the control unit 11 and the mobile communication device 12 (step 202). A voicemail box 62 associated with the mobile communication device is checked for messages (step 204). A voicemail box (e.g. 68, 70) associated with a second communication device (e.g. a home phone) is checked (step 206). At least one voicemail message received from at least one of the first voicemail box 62 the second voicemail box (e.g. 68, 70) is presented to the user via a unified, single voice user interface of a control unit (step 208).

13

Remote and Local Access to Vehicle Data

In addition to the network data features described above, the control unit 11 also includes a plurality of vehicle monitoring and control features. The control unit 11 communicates with vehicle sensor 72 and vehicle actuator 74 via at vehicle data bus 76 to obtain vehicle data (see FIG. 1). As shown in FIG. 2, the control unit 11 includes a vehicle data input/output (“I/O”) module 78 that is in communication with the vehicle data bus 76. Of course, although only a single vehicle sensor 72, actuator 74, and data bus 76 are shown, it is understood that a plurality of sensors 72, actuators 74 and data busses 76 could be in communication with the control unit 11.

The control unit 11 is also operable to independently sense vehicle data using accelerometer module 80 and GPS module 82. For example, the accelerometer module 80 could be used to detect “hard turns” at speeds above a certain threshold. The GPS module 82 could be used to detect vehicle location, and could be used to detect vehicle speed. In one example the accelerometer module 80 works in conjunction with a brake sensor to determine braking events.

The integration of the control unit 11 with the vehicle data bus 76 enables a user to have both remote and local access to vehicle data for vehicle 8 such that the control unit 11 may communicate vehicle data to a user while the user is away from the vehicle 8 (the “self-contained mode”) or while the user is in or close to the vehicle 8 (the “immersive mode”).

The vehicle data may be communicated to a user such as a vehicle driver or vehicle owner, or may be communicated to a third party such as a vehicle dealer, an insurance company or a rental company, for example.

Remote Monitoring and Control

The control unit 11 communicates with the one or more vehicle sensors (shown schematically as sensor 72 in FIG. 1) to monitor the status of various vehicle components such as a door lock state, a trunk lock state, a window or sunroof status (open, partially open, closed), an odometer reading, a fuel level, an oil life, a tire pressure, and vehicle diagnostic information.

The control unit 11 may also communicate with one or more vehicle actuators (shown schematically as actuator 74 in FIG. 1) to lock a portion of the vehicle 8 (e.g. door, trunk, etc.) or to change a vehicle component from a first state to a second state (e.g. open window, close window, start engine). In one example the control unit 11 may be configured to start the vehicle engine only if an external temperature is sufficiently low. In one example the control unit 11 may be configured to only close a window, sunroof or convertible top. In one example the control unit 11 may work in conjunction with existing vehicle anti-pinch technology so that a command to close a window, sunroof or convertible top is not performed or is not completed if a vehicle occupant has one or more fingers extending outside a window, sunroof, or roof area that would otherwise be concealed by a convertible top. In one example the control unit 11 may be configured to automatically close a window, sunroof or convertible top if the sensor 72 communicates the detection of rain to the control unit 11.

A user can communicate with the control unit 11 to interact with the sensor 72 and actuator 74 by using voice commands on the mobile communications device 12 or via a microphone in the vehicle 17, by using a graphical user interface on the mobile communications device 12 (see interface on mobile communications device 12 of FIG. 3), or by using a web-based interface 28 on a user computer 29 (see FIG. 1).

Personalization of Vehicle Data, Exceptions, and Vehicle Alerts

The control unit 11 is configured to provide alerts to a user according to the user’s profile 30. The alerts may contain a

14

variety of vehicle warnings (e.g. notification of low tire pressure, ABS brake activation, etc.).

The control unit 11 permits a user to indicate in their profile a desired alert frequency. For example, a user could set their profile 30 so that when the user is remote from the vehicle 8 the control unit 11 only provides an alert as a email notification at a desired rate (e.g. once per trip, or a minimum interval between notifications). As another example, a user could set their profile 30 so that when the user is within the vehicle 8 the control unit 11 provides an alert as a spoken notification at a desired rate (e.g. once per trip, or a minimum interval between notifications).

In one example the control unit 11 includes a plurality of exceptions such that the user’s communication frequency settings are disregarded for certain alerts and the exception alerts are provided upon detection. In one example the exception alerts include at least one of a low tire pressure condition, an ABS brake activation, a traction control activation, an airbag deployment, a high speed threshold being exceeded, or a low fuel condition.

In one example a parent could configure the control unit 11 so that if a child was driving the vehicle 8 the parent would receive notifications of the child driving the vehicle 8 to prohibited locations, above acceptable speeds, in a manner that enabled traction control, was performing hard turns, etc.

Vehicle Reports

The control unit 11 may be configured to transmit vehicle reports either to a remote user (e.g., via email to the mobile communication device 12 or computer 29, or via a web based graphical user interface on the mobile communication device 12 or computer 29), or to a vehicle occupant user (e.g. spoken report).

The report may be a trip report that includes one or more maps showing driving history. The trip report may include various details such as top speeds, a quantity of hard turns, etc. The trip reports may also be segmented into days, or into trips, for example.

The report may include an automatic vehicle location feature such that a vehicle location is presented in real-time on a map. This could be useful for security reasons or for parental supervision reasons if a parent or employer wanted to monitor where a child or employee was driving.

The report may include various “green” or “fuel economy” pieces of information. For example, the report could include an average fuel economy, could include an indication of vehicle emissions or a vehicle environmental footprint. In one example the indication of environmental footprint data includes an indication of a quantity of trees affected by the vehicle 8.

The “fuel economy” reports could work in conjunction with the control unit 11 voice control functionality. For example, a user could speak “I just spent \$35 on gas” and the control unit 11 could use this data to determine a cost of gas per gallon, and could then present to a user the total cost of a selected trip that included both gas expenditures and vehicle degradation (e.g. cost of vehicle wear and tear for a trip).

The control unit may also include carpooling features such that a user could indicate either by a voice command or through their profile 30 a desire to participate in a carpool. The control unit 11 could communicate with the server 27 to determine if other individuals who have similar commutes and compatible driving behaviors also have a desire to participate in a carpool. If a match was found the server 27 could notify the individuals to facilitate contact between the individuals (e.g. via email, or via speech such as “A potential carpool partner has been found”). In one example the control unit 11 may obtain contact information for the potential car-

15

pool partner and may provide a user with an opportunity to initiate contact with the potential carpool partner (e.g., “Would you like to contact your potential carpool partner”) based upon available contact information for the potential carpool partner. In one example the control unit **11** classifies a driver based upon the drivers driving behaviors (e.g., cautious driver, aggressive driver, etc.). In one example the control unit **11** may exclude two drivers having similar commutes as potential carpool partners in response to the driving behaviors of the drivers vehicles differing beyond a predefined threshold.

In accordance with the provisions of the patent statutes and jurisprudence, exemplary configurations described above are considered to represent a preferred embodiment of the invention. However, it should be noted that the invention can be practiced otherwise than as specifically illustrated and described without departing from its spirit or scope.

What is claimed is:

1. A vehicle communication system comprising:

a control unit in a vehicle;

a vehicle data bus operable to transmit vehicle data to the control unit; and

a mobile communication device having data network access over which the mobile communication device receives network data, the mobile device having a self-contained mode in which the mobile communication device processes and displays the network data received via the data network and in which the control unit transmits the vehicle data to the mobile communication device via the data network when the mobile communication device is away from the vehicle, the mobile communication device also having an immersive mode in which the control unit communicates with the mobile communication device through direct wireless connection when the mobile communication device is in or near the vehicle and in which the control unit processes the network data received via the data network and in which the control unit presents the vehicle data in the vehicle.

2. The system of claim **1** further including a user profile associated with the mobile device, the control unit processing the network data and the vehicle data based upon the user profile, wherein the control unit selects the user profile based upon an identification of the mobile device associated with the profile, and wherein the control unit determines when to present the network data and the vehicle data to the user based upon the user profile.

3. The system of claim **2** wherein the control unit subjects a first portion of the vehicle data to exceptions such that the first portion of vehicle data is only communicated to a user as permitted by the user profile, and wherein the control unit exempts a second portion of the vehicle data from the exceptions such that the second portion of vehicle data is communicated to the user regardless of the user profile.

4. The system of claim **3**, wherein the second portion of vehicle data includes a notification of at least one of a low tire pressure condition, an ABS brake activation, a traction control activation, an airbag deployment, a high speed threshold being exceeded, a low fuel condition, or a vehicle diagnostic alert.

5. The system of claim **2** wherein the network data includes at least one of emails, calendar data, SMS messages, or online content, and wherein a portion of the network data is presented to the user based upon the user profile.

6. The system of claim **5** wherein the user profile includes criteria based upon which the control unit automatically replies to a subset of the emails without presenting them to the user.

16

7. The system of claim **2** wherein a plurality of profiles, including the user profile, are stored on a server accessible via the internet and wherein the user profile can be modified by the user on the server via the internet, the control unit downloading the user profile from the server via the data network access of the mobile device or via a separate data network access connection of the control device.

8. The system of claim **7** wherein the control unit is operable to communicate with the mobile communication device through either a direct wireless connection with the mobile communication device or via the server through the data network.

9. The system of claim **8**, wherein the direct wireless connection between the mobile communication device and the control unit is a Bluetooth connection.

10. The system of claim **7** wherein the server is operable to communicate alerts and reports to the mobile communication device, the alerts including one or more vehicle notifications, and the reports including analysis of vehicle trips.

11. The system of claim **10** wherein the report includes at least one of vehicle fuel economy data, vehicle emissions data, or vehicle environmental footprint data.

12. The system of claim **1** wherein the vehicle data includes at least one of vehicle sensor data or vehicle actuation data.

13. The system of claim **12** wherein the control unit is operable to transmit a vehicle actuation command along the vehicle data bus in response to both a spoken command received within the vehicle and a command received from the mobile communication device.

14. The system of claim **12** wherein the vehicle actuation data is a command to lock a portion of the vehicle or to change a vehicle component from a first state to a second state.

15. The system of claim **1** wherein the mobile device switches modes based upon establishment of communication between the mobile device and the control unit.

16. The system of claim **1** wherein the mobile device switches modes based upon one of the control unit and the mobile device detecting the presence of the other of the control unit and the mobile device.

17. The system of claim **1** wherein the network data includes a plurality of emails and wherein the control unit converts text in the plurality of emails to audible speech and plays the audible speech in the vehicle.

18. The system of claim **1** further including a microphone receiving voice commands from a user, the control unit processing the voice commands and presenting the network data or the vehicle data based upon the voice commands.

19. The system of claim **1** wherein the mobile device also has voice network access and wherein voice calls handled by the mobile device in immersive communication mode are played through at least one speaker connected via the control unit.

20. A method for communicating vehicle data and network data to a user including the steps of:

a) determining a presence of a mobile communication device in the vehicle;

b) downloading network data via the mobile communication device onto a control unit in the vehicle;

c) downloading vehicle data to the control unit via at least one vehicle data bus based upon a user profile associated with the mobile communication device; and

d) based upon said step a) and based on a user profile, presenting the network data and the vehicle data to the user.

17

21. The method of claim 20 further including the step of switching the mobile communication device from a self-contained mode to an immersive communication mode based upon said step a).

22. The method of claim 20 further including the step of:

e) transmitting vehicle data to the mobile communication device via a server in communication with the mobile communication device or via a direct wireless connection with the mobile communication device based on the user profile.

23. The method of claim 20 wherein the network data includes at least one of emails, calendar data, SMS messages, or online content, and wherein the vehicle data includes vehicle sensor data.

24. The method of claim 20 further including the steps of: receiving a vehicle actuator command from one of a spoken command from a vehicle occupant or from a command received from the mobile communication device; and

uploading the vehicle actuator command to the vehicle data bus in response to said receiving a vehicle actuator command.

18

25. The method of claim 20 wherein the vehicle data includes at least one of a vehicle notification, a vehicle trip report, a vehicle location, a calculated environmental impact of a vehicle trip, or a calculated vehicle efficiency for a trip.

26. The method of claim 20 further including the steps of:

detecting a repeated vehicle path for a driver;

comparing the repeated vehicle path to vehicle paths of drivers of other vehicles;

detecting the drivers of two vehicles as potential carpool partners in response to an overlap in the vehicle paths; and

notifying the drivers of each vehicle of the detection of a potential carpool partner.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said detecting the drivers of two vehicles as potential carpool partners in response to an overlap in the vehicle paths includes:

comparing driving behaviors of the drivers of the two vehicles; and

excluding the drivers as potential carpool partners in response to the driving behaviors of the drivers of the two vehicles differing beyond a predefined threshold.

* * * * *